

GP practice report

Grove House Practice

November 2025

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About this report

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Halton as part of our Enter and View programme. These visits allow us to observe services first-hand, speak with patients and staff, and gather feedback about people's experiences of care and access to appointments.

Our findings reflect what we saw during the visit and what people told us on the day. We aim to give clear, balanced insight into what is working well and where improvements could be made.

A draft of this report has been shared with the practice for comment, and any clarifications or updates will be included in the final published version.

1. Introduction

This Enter and View visit was carried out as part of Healthwatch Halton's statutory duty to gather people's views and experiences of accessing local health services. Enter and View visits are not inspections; they offer an independent patient voice through observation, engagement and feedback.

This was an announced visit to Grove House Practice at St Paul's Health Centre.

Heath Road Medical Centre, a satellite site, was not visited on this occasion.

Information relating to Heath Road is included solely for background context and is taken from a previous visit.

2. Background Information

Details	Information
Address	Grove House Practice St Paul's Health Centre, High Street, Runcorn, WA7 1AB 01928 566561
Registered Patients	14,700
GPs	11
GP Assistants	4
Advanced Nurse Practitioners	3 (one trainee)
Nurses	4
Nurse Associate	1
Healthcare Assistant	1
Care Navigators	14 (one apprentice)
Managers	3
Administrators	10
Clinical Pharmacist	1
NHS Total Triage	Yes – practice follows NHS guidance
Appointment System	Patches used for all routine requests; Care Navigators complete forms for those unable to use it
Same-Day Appointments	Yes
Pre-Bookable Appointments	Yes
GP Extra Referrals	Yes
Patient Participation Group	Active – 15 members

3. First Impressions and Environment

3.1 External Access

Grove House sits within St Paul's Health Centre and shares the main building entrance with Tower House. Parking at the Brindley Theatre was described by some patients as difficult due to the slope, particularly for older adults or those with mobility needs.

The practice entrance is step-free, with automatic doors leading into a bright shared hallway.

3.2 Reception and Waiting Area

The Grove House reception windows, decorated with Christmas lights at the time of the visit, were busy throughout. Patients approached with queries about prescriptions, appointments and follow-up information. Staff interactions observed were generally friendly and professional.

The waiting area is compact, with a mix of bench and forward-facing chairs. A privacy screen is positioned around the self-service blood pressure monitor, though the screen itself appeared worn and covered in torn notices.

A Christmas tree, seasonal bunting, a plant and a wellbeing banner contributed to the overall feel of the space. Information boards were tidy and leaflet stocks were in good order.

A TV played Halton Hospital Radio and served as the patient calling screen. A second calling display mounted above it was not functioning during the visit. Flooring differed between areas, with nonslip flooring in the waiting room and carpeting in the corridors.

3.3 Toilets

Shared toilets were clean but clearly dated. Posters on cancer awareness were available, but some had been placed on a stool, creating a cluttered and less hygienic impression.

4 Observations – Heath Road Medical Centre (Previous Visit)

Heath Road was not visited on 27/11/25. The following is retained from an earlier Enter and View visit for background context only.

4.1 External Environment and Access

Heath Road is a satellite practice managed by Grove House Surgery. It is situated off Heath Road on a small public dead-end street. Limited patient parking is available at the front. Access is via a paved ramp into a small entrance porch with GP Connect information displayed.

4.2 Reception and Waiting Area

The waiting room is bright, clean and spacious with serviceable seating. Noticeboards and leaflet racks contained wellbeing and service information. Posters promoted the NHS App, vaccines, Respect campaigns and online services. Music was playing at a loud level. The reception desk also functions as an office and offers limited privacy. Staff call patients in directly due to the lack of an electronic calling system.

5. What People Told Us

Patient experiences at Grove House varied. Many expressed confidence in clinicians and said care was good once they reached the right person. Others described difficulties with booking systems, digital processes or administrative communication.

Below, people's words are woven into the narrative exactly as they shared them.

5.1 Access to Appointments

Patients reported a wide range of experiences. Several told us they could usually secure appointments when needed, while others described encountering delays or confusion.

One carer supporting an elderly parent said:

"I requested this appointment two weeks ago but it's taken three or four goes to get it... I sent a Patches request in but they didn't action it, so I had to follow up with calls to reception."

They also described inconsistency around home visits for their housebound father, despite clear clinical needs.

Another patient told us:

“Reception staff will no longer book you in at reception or when you call; they just direct you to Patches and make you use the online service.”

Others reported smooth experiences, including someone who said they had “*got one for this afternoon*” through PATCHS and appreciated how it aligned with another appointment they were attending that day.

For families, access varied. One parent explained they secured an urgent appointment “*this morning for my son*” through PATCHS. Another said that when their husband tried to book for one of the children, “*it wouldn’t let my husband book anything... he had to contact me to do it on my phone.*”

5.2 Use of Online Services (Patches and NHS App)

PATCHS sits at the centre of the appointment model. While some patients found it helpful, others experienced barriers.

A patient told us:

“I don’t use the NHS App.”

Another said they used it only for prescriptions and information.

A number of people highlighted confusion or inconsistency around digital pathways, including carers supporting older relatives. One carer said they had “no confidence in the practice booking systems” after a PATCHS request was not processed.

By contrast, another patient felt things had improved:

“I find appointments and communication have improved a lot since Patches was introduced.”

Digital systems for children presented particular issues, with the requirement for parents to submit requests through their own accounts causing blocked attempts for other family members.

5.3 Experience of Care

Across different conversations, patients consistently praised the clinical team at Grove House.

People described clinicians as “*really good*,” “*caring*,” and supportive. One patient emphasised the value of continuity, saying:

“My GP has been really good and caring.”

Several individuals appreciated automatic prescription arrangements, such as:

“The GP also sends our prescriptions automatically to the chemist.”

The call-back system was positively received, with one person explaining:

“Staff don’t ask me to go online... They have call-back which I like so I’m not waiting.”

Even patients who expressed frustration with booking or admin processes often ended by stressing how well they were treated once they reached clinical staff.

5.4 Communication and Practical Considerations

A few patients raised concerns about communication between parts of the system. One carer said:

“There has been some miscommunication in the practice... I have no confidence in the practice booking systems.”

Others described inconsistency in administrative processes, including Patches requests not being followed up, or uncertainty about who could complete digital forms on behalf of dependants.

6. Key Findings

What is working well

- *Clinicians received consistent praise for being caring, professional and supportive*
- *Improved communication for some patients since adopting Patches*
- *Efficient prescription arrangements for many*
- *Friendly interactions observed between staff and patients*
- *Active Patient Participation Group*

Where improvements may help

- *Ensuring Patches requests are actioned consistently*
- *Supporting carers booking for dependants, especially children*

- *Maintaining clear non-digital access routes*
- *Improving consistency of administrative communication*
- *Tidying and updating aspects of the waiting area and toilet facilities*
- *Repairing the non-functioning patient calling display*

7. Summary

Grove House Practice is clearly valued for the care it provides. Patients spoke positively about the professionalism of the clinical team and the support they received once they were in the consultation room. At the same time, the move towards digital-first access does not work well for everyone. Some people described missed PATCHS requests or inconsistent administrative follow-up, which affected their confidence in the system.

Small improvements to the environment, clearer communication, and better support for carers and those who struggle with digital tools would help create a more consistent and accessible experience for patients.

8. Recommendations

Based on what we observed and what patients told us on the day, we have highlighted a small number of areas where improvements could make access and communication smoother for patients.

1. Appointment Access and Digital Inclusion

Some patients struggled with Patches or felt unsure about how their requests were handled. Keeping non-digital routes clear and offering simple guidance would help.

The practice may wish to:

- *Maintain telephone booking for those unable to use online tools.*
- *Introduce routine checks to ensure Patchs requests are not missed.*
- *Offer clear guidance and support for carers booking for dependants, including joint or proxy access options*

2. Environment and Facilities

A few aspects of the waiting area and toilets would benefit from refresh or repair to improve the overall experience.

The practice may wish to:

- *Refurbish patient toilets at Grove House*
- *Replace or refresh the privacy screen around the blood monitor*
- *Ensure health information is displayed hygienically and not left on stools or surfaces*
- *Repair or replace the second patient calling screen.*

3. Communication and Patient Experience

Most people were positive about their care, though a few said that the administrative side sometimes felt unclear or inconsistent.

The practice may wish to:

- *Strengthen internal communication between reception, admin and triage teams.*

- *Provide clearer information on appointment pathways and expectations.*
- *Continue promoting Care Navigator support for those who need help with Patches.*

4. Accessibility

Some patients found the Brindley Theatre parking slope difficult to manage.

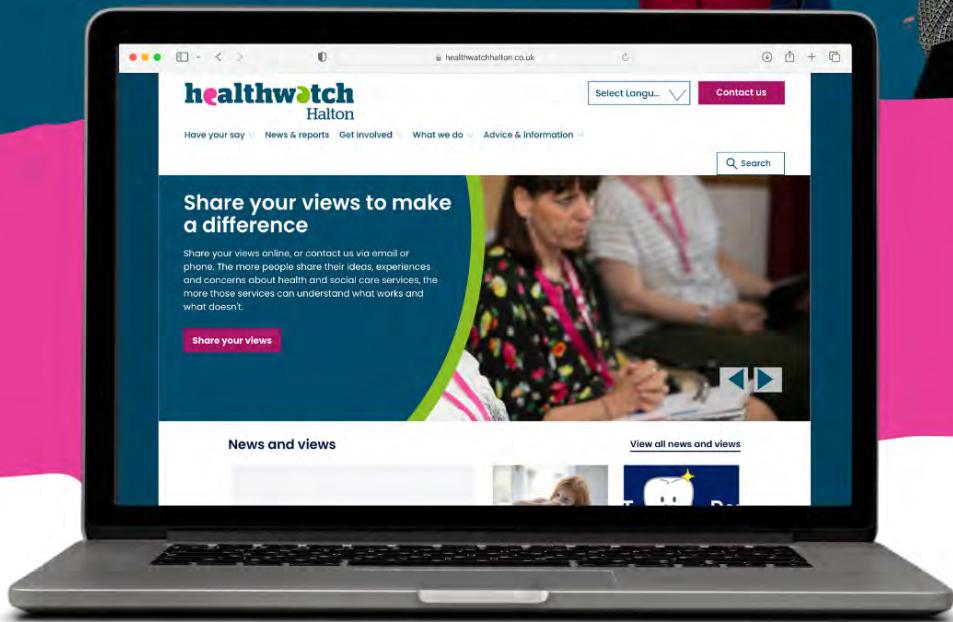
The practice may wish to:

- *Provide information on alternative parking options.*

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We are committed to the quality of our information.
Every three years we perform an in-depth audit
so that we can be certain of this.

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